

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, February 12, 2014
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

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TOWN CLERK
MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

Members Present: Alice Torres, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Liz Fraser, Monica Beylea, Amy Waterman, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg and Christine O'Grady. Also Present: Cindy Guerreri.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Co-Chair Alice Torres called the meeting to order at 12:18 P.M. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Donna distributed flyers for a bi-lingual People Empowering People (PEP) program and a Middletown Schools Association (MSA) sponsored forum conducted by a licensed social worker. Its purpose is to provide parents strategies to reduce their child's stress during the standardized testing period. Monica noted that the Feb. 25th meeting of Opportunity Knocks will probably not be held in its regular location of the Hazen Room at the YMCA. Liz announced her decision to take the Early Care and Education Policy Analyst position at CT Association of Human Services (CAHS). To a round of applause, she was congratulated, but will be missed in her local role as director of the Middletown Adult Education Even Start program. Liz will continue advocating for dual generation learning programs. Chris circulated a save the date flyer for the Keefe-Bruyette Symposium at St. Joseph's University to be held on March 17th. She also circulated a flyer for the 8th Annual Childhood Conversations Conference. Alice distributed a save the date flyer for regional training on an introduction to the new Early Learning and Development Standards in CT sponsored by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Christine reminded the Council that Middlesex Hospital received funding through the Children's Trust Fund and through that she will be facilitating a community cafe on Sat., Mar. 29 at Woodrow Wilson Middle School.

III. Acceptance of the January 15, 2014 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Liz Fraser seconded. The motion carried unanimously with thanks.

IV. Financial Report: was distributed, showing no real significant changes and a to-date balance of \$19,187.50 in unearned funds. The YMCA and SmartEarly Learning Center each have one opening. The Office of Early Childhood has decided not to move spaces between communities this year, so we will not receive an additional six school day spaces at Bielefield School.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Monthly Summary Report: was distributed and reviewed. Parent fees increased after a dip in December.

New Business: The Board of Education preschool program has requested that the Council approve a line item transfer of \$5,000. Christine moved to allow the transfer. Wendy Berlind seconded. A brief discussion followed. The motion carried unanimously.

Local Programs News: South Farms has received word of a successful NAEYC reaccreditation decision last week. Congratulations to the staff!

Middletown Birth Cohort Information: At the request of the Council last month, Chris compiled data on Middletown births from 2006 - 2012 for the Council's review. Discussion followed. Monica shared that there are only 31 family child care providers in Middletown, down from over 50 ten years ago.

Birth to Three Annual Report: Chris distributed a page from the report that outlined the town by town 2012 births, referrals for services and numbers of children served. Middletown had 553 births in 2012 and of those, 109 referrals with 119 children being served. She noted that the special education preschool population is on the rise and many of those children are coming from Birth to Three Program. Discussion followed.

Family Child Care Home Contract Summary: Chris reported that Helen Figueroa successfully negotiated a contract for family child care providers. A handout outlining key points of the plan was distributed and reviewed. Highlights include incentives for Kith 'n Kin providers to become licensed, professional development to be offered to family child care providers, funds for capital improvements, and a seat on the Early Childhood Cabinet. Discussion followed. These offerings may change the downswing and we may see a rise in family child care providers. There is a new federal initiative out for a partnership between Early Head Start programs and family child care homes. Alice will share more details when she receives them.

Governor's Early Childhood Budget Recommendations: A document highlighting the Office of Early Childhood's portion of the governor's budget proposal was distributed and reviewed. The budget recommendations for early childhood include a 3% increase in rates for School Readiness programs and State Funded centers, a 3% rate increase in Care4kids rates that will be retroactive to January 2014, funds to establish a Quality Rating and Information System (QRIS), funds to increase the frequency of licensing inspections, and an increase in the Quality Enhancement Grant funds. It includes a four year plan to roll out universal preschool in CT. Details for this plan have not yet been fully developed. Even Start remains in the budget. The Children's Trust Fund is flat-funded, so the assumption is that Family School Connect continues to be funded. Donna will check on this.

Testimony to Appropriations Committee: Testimony from this Council supporting the governor's budget, movement toward universal preschool and the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in statutes was distributed. Izzi Greenberg moved that the Council accept and submit this testimony. Christine O'Grady seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Federal Early Childhood Budget Update: Chris distributed a document that highlights the federal early childhood budget. It showed increases for Head Start and Early Head Start, increases for the Child Care & Development Block Grant, which is CT's Care4kids program, increases for Part C early intervention programs, and increases for Women Infants and Children (WIC). There are new funds for preschool development grants to the states for the purpose of increasing access to preschool for low-income children. Tied to these dollars is a mandate that teachers have a bachelor degree and are paid on a par with public school teachers. This is an important step towards resolving the early childhood teacher wage issue. Chris will email an advocacy alert from the National Women's Law Center to Council members so that they may contact their members of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor the Strong Start bill.

Alliance Update: Chris distributed the Early Childhood Alliance 2014 Legislative Policy Platform. Two focus areas are the establishment of the OEC in statute and supporting strategies to increase wages for early childhood teachers. Izzi and Chris will continue to meet with our legislative delegation to share this important information.

Early Head Start (EHS) Update: Alice encouraged referrals to the program and circulated information cards about EHS. She and her staff are currently focused on the upcoming federal review in March. Hiring of staff is ongoing and interviews are taking place. In sequestration news, funds will be returned to programs so they will have to create a plan. Alice will share details of EHS and child care partnerships as information is received. The potential for using family child care homes as partners in our local planning consideration was discussed. She noted that the program will maintain home visiting. Alice distributed the EHS Fall Cycle Report on Progress Towards School Readiness Goals for review and discussion.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Monica gave a shout out to our School Readiness providers for having no expulsion or suspensions! The behavioral health system that has been established over the years by Opportunity Knocks is also credited with contributing to this success. ASQ training spots are still open.

Child First Update: Christine O'Grady reported that there are 11 families on the wait list and she encouraged referrals.

Pre K -K Playgroups: Donna reported that the first preschool playgroup was held at Spencer School this morning. It had a total of five families and seven children and went very well. She noted that iCARE did the outreach to recruit families.

Discovery Report:

Cindy reported that R. David Addams starts his new position at the Graustein Memorial Fund in mid-March. The RFP will be released soon and the early literacy grant proposal will be included in the RFP.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 P.M. with thanks to those in attendance.

In lieu of the March meeting, the Middletown School Readiness Council will participate in
Early Childhood Advocacy Day
Wednesday, March 19th, 2014
9:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
State Capitol
210 Capitol Ave., Hartford
Old Judiciary Room (3rd Floor)

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels

